

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
May 28, 2018

The President. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you very much. What an honor.
Secretary Mattis——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. And I love you too. [*Laughter*] General Dunford, Joint Chiefs, members of the Armed Forces, members of the Cabinet, Members of Congress, and distinguished guests: Thank you for joining us on this solemn day of remembrance. We are gathered here on the sacred soil of Arlington National Cemetery to honor the lives and deeds of America's greatest heroes: the men and women who laid down their lives for our freedom. Today we pay tribute to their service, we mourn alongside their families, and we strive to be worthy of their sacrifice.

The heroes who rest in these hallowed fields—in the cemeteries, battlefields, and burial grounds near and far—are drawn from the full tapestry of American life. They came from every generation, from towering cities and windswept prairies, from privilege and from poverty. They were generals and privates, captains and corporals, of every race, color, and of every creed. But they were all brothers and sisters in arms. And they were all united then, as they are united now forever, by their undying love of our great country.

Theirs was a love more deep and more pure than most will ever know. It was a love that willed them up mountains, through deserts, across oceans, and into enemy camps and unknown dangers. They marched into hell so that America could know the blessings of peace. They died so that freedom could live.

America's legacy of service is exemplified by a World War II veteran who joins us today, Senator Bob Dole. Earlier this year, I was fortunate to present a very special award to Bob—the Congressional Gold Medal. Bob, thank you for honoring us with your presence, and thank you for your lifetime of service to our Nation. Today we remember your fallen comrades who never returned home from that great struggle for freedom.

We are also proud to be in the company of another American hero, Navy veteran Ray Chavez. At 106 years of age—and he was in the Oval Office 2 days ago, and he doesn't look a day over 60—[*laughter*]—he's the oldest living survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor. What a guy. And, Ray, you are truly an inspiration to all who are here today and all of our great country. Thank you, Ray, for being with us. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Most importantly, we're joined today by the families of the American heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice. We cannot imagine the depth of emotion that this day brings each year: the grief renewed, the memories relived, those last beautiful moments together cherished and always remembered. And you also feel that incredible pride, a pride shared by one really and truly grateful Nation.

To every parent who weeps for a child, to every child who mourns for a parent, and to every husband or wife whose heart has been torn in two: Today we ask God to comfort your pain, to ease your sorrow, and to wipe away your tears. This is a very special day. And today our whole country thanks you, embraces you, and pledges to you: We will never forget our heroes.

Joining us today is the family of Marine Lieutenant Colonel David Greene, who rests here at Arlington. Dave grew up in Upstate New York, dreaming of attending the United States Naval Academy. In 1982, that dream came true. Soon another dream came true when Dave met his

eternal soulmate, Sarah, who is here with their two beautiful children Jena and Wesley. [Applause] Please. He's looking down on you right now. You know that, right? He's looking down on you, and he's so proud and happy.

After 10 years of service as a Marine helicopter pilot, Dave left Active Duty to spend more time with the people who truly filled his heart. Those are the people you just met. But Sarah knew the man she married, she knew he couldn't live without serving. Couldn't do it. So she suggested he join the services in the form of Reserves, and that's what he did.

In January 2004, Dave deployed to Iraq. That summer, just a few weeks before he was scheduled to return home, he was called in to provide air support for ground troops who were in very serious danger. They were in very serious trouble. He immediately raced to the scene. As he covered his troops, he was shot by ground fire, giving up his life for his comrades and for his country.

Lieutenant Colonel Greene remains one of the highest ranking marines to have been killed in Iraq since 2003. But for him, it was never about rank or title. Like all of his fellow warriors, it was only about duty. He served to defend our flag and our freedom.

And now his son Wesley, who is a senior at Liberty University, plans to follow in his father's footsteps and join the military. Wesley, I just want to congratulate you and your entire family. Great, great family. Thank you very much, and thank you for being here with us. Thank you very much. Beautiful. You're going to love the military. These are incredible people.

We're also honored to have with us today the family of Army Captain Mark Stubenhofer and his wife Patty and their children Lauren, Justin, and Hope. [Applause] Please. Thank you for being with us. Thank you very much. Such an honor.

Mark grew up not far from here, in Springfield, Virginia. Every year, he visited these grounds and hoped to someday serve here as a member of that very, very famous Old Guard. In 2004, Mark deployed to Iraq for the second time. While he was there, Patty went into labor with their third child, and Mark was with her by phone when their beautiful baby girl was born. Together, they named her Hope.

Just a few months later, Mark was on a mission near Baghdad when he was tragically slain by a sniper's bullet. Today, Hope is 13 years old. Although she never had the chance to meet her great father, she can feel his love wrapped around her every single day. And when Patty puts her children to bed and kisses them goodnight, she can see Mark's legacy beaming back at her through their bright and glowing eyes. Thank you so much. Really beautiful. Thank you.

[At this point, the President looked up and pointed toward the sky.]

You know that, right?

Also joining us today is a very special friend, 7-year-old Christian Jacobs, who is here with his mom Brittany. I met Christian exactly 1 year ago today. Last year, after the wreath-laying ceremony, Christian walked over to me with great confidence, shook my hand, looked me straight in the eye, and asked if I would like to meet his dad. [Laughter] He loved his dad, Marine Sergeant Christopher Jacobs, who died when Christian was just 8 months old.

Next, Christian, looking as sharp as you could look dressed in a beautiful Marine outfit—I've never seen a marine look that good in my life, Christian. [Laughter] He wanted to look good, he told me, as a tribute to his father. And he led me to his dad's grave, and we paid our respects together. It was a moment I will always remember.

Christian, I want you to know that even though your father has left this world—he's left it for the next—but he's not gone. He'll never be gone. Your dad's love, courage, and strength live in

you, Christian. And as you grow bigger and stronger, just like him, so too does your father's incredible legacy. So thank you both. That's so beautiful. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Christian. Good to see you. He's become my friend, I will tell you. [Laughter] Special young man.

To every family member of the fallen, I want you to know that the legacy of those you lost does not fade with time, but grows only more powerful. Their legacy does not, like a voice in the distance, become a faint echo. But instead, their legacy grows deeper, spreading further, touching more lives, reaching down through time and out across many generations. Through their sacrifice, your loved ones have achieved something very, very special: immortality.

Today we also remember the more than 82,000 American service men and women who remain missing from wars and conflicts fought over the past century. We will never stop searching for them. And whenever possible, we will bring them home. We pledge to remember not just on Memorial Day, we will always remember them. We will remember them every day.

Moments ago, I laid a wreath in tribute to those resting "in honored glory." For more than 80 years, the Sentinels of the Old Guard have kept watch over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Serving in this elite unit is among the most prestigious honors in the United States military. While the rest of us sleep, while we go about our lives, through every minute, through every day, through freezing cold, scorching heat, and raging storms, they stand watch.

Even when the Earth shook beneath their feet on 9/11 and smoke from the Pentagon darkened the sky above these tree-lined hills, here they remained, faithful at their post, eternal on guard. They never moved. The Sentinel always stands, because America never forgets it's our heroes who make us who we are and who determine what we will be.

Our fallen heroes have not only written our history, they've shaped our destiny. They saved the lives of the men and women with whom they served. They cared for their families more than anything in the world. They love their families. They inspired their communities, uplifted their country, and provided the best example of courage, virtue, and valor the world will ever know. They fought and bled and died so that America would forever remain safe and strong and free. Each of the markers on that field—each of the names engraved in stone—teach us what it means to be loyal and faithful and proud and brave and righteous and true.

That is why we come to this most sacred place. That is why we guard these grounds with absolute devotion. That is why we always will remember. Because here—on this soil, on these grounds, beneath those fields—lies the true source of American greatness, of American glory, and of American freedom. As long as we are blessed with patriots such as these, we shall forever remain one people, one family, and one Nation under God.

It's been my great honor to be with you today. I want to thank you. May God bless the families of the fallen. May God bless the men and women who serve. And may God bless the United States of America, our great country. Thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC; and former Sen. Robert J. Dole.

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